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It's easy to feel anxious given the rapid progress the virus has made, but the first thing you should do is take a deep breath. Hospitality is about people, including yourself, so before you worry about revenue predictions or ADRs, make sure you, your employees and your guests are as safe as can be. The good news is, the transmission of the disease—and the anxiety of staff and guests alike—can be greatly limited with a few precautionary steps.

Ensure Your Staff Knows How to Protect Themselves

Your employees don't need masks, but they do need to be washing their hands as often as possible, using disinfectant whenever necessary, and avoiding touching their faces. If you can provide hand sanitizer to your staff, this is an excellent precaution. It also has a calming effect—everyone responds better to problems they feel they can control to some extent. The hand sanitizer does just that. Ultimately, a calm staff will be more able to protect themselves and their guests.

Reconsider Your Sick Leave Policies

Encourage staff who are experiencing flu-like symptoms to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (37.8°C or greater) and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick. Employers can use vacation time, or allow quarantined employees to work from home. Employers should also consider maintaining flexible policies that allow employees to stay home to care for a sick family member.

Employers should also take into consideration whether they'll require a doctor's note if an employee is showing symptoms, keeping in mind that these may be difficult to get when care-providers are busy dealing with the virus.

Don't Forget about Occupational Health & Safety

Under Saskatchewan workplace health and safety laws, employers have an obligation to take every reasonable step to ensure a safe workplace — and this applies to the coronavirus as well. If employers know an employee has recently traveled to a high-risk area or has been in contact with an infected person, it would be reasonable to encourage them to seek medical attention.

If you have reason to believe an employee might have the coronavirus you should communicate with the employee first, get some information and determine whether or not you need to send them home and contact public health.

Communicate Actions You're Taking

The last step is to proactively communicate to your guests and staff that you're taking this situation seriously and, more importantly, taking steps to ensure that the virus will not spread on your property. You're likely already doing a lot: cleaning rooms daily, using disinfectant frequently, and overall maintaining a high level of cleanliness. Make sure everyone who enters your building – employees and guests alike - know how well you're looking after them.

When Good Intentions Aren't Enough

Such advice goes only so far, however. While employers can take commonsense steps to prevent the spread of the virus, response plans are necessary to ensure business continuity is maintained during a pandemic and staff expectations are clarified. Employers should review their Outbreak Response Plan. If they don't have these plans, now is the time to create them.

If you need help or guidance navigating this uncertainty, reach out to Service Hospitality and speak with one of our advisors at info@servicehospitality.com or 306-522-5499.

More information and resources coming your way soon on Coronavirus